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ABSTRACT

The Transfer Opportunities Program (TOP) at the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) has focused primarily on faculty development and curriculum design as the essential elements in improving the transfer prospects of students. Extensive faculty development activities were undertaken to forge collegial agreements about standards of literacy and appropriate pedagogical activities, coupled with efforts to design a two-year, integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum centered on language use. Other TOP activities included the following: (1) the full-time foundation-year curriculum was modified to accommodate part-time students; (2) counseling staff have been included as active teaching members of each interdisciplinary instructional team; (3) a series of in-service workshops on the "Critical Literacy" issue were conducted to gain comparability in the way faculty dealt with student language use; and (4) selected faculty designed and conducted professional development seminars on such topics as "Styles of Interpretation of Classical and Medieval Literature" and "Black American Women's Narrative." (EJV)

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TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA

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TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA

Overview

The Transfer Opportunities Program has focused primarily on faculty development and curriculum design as the essential elements in improving transfer prospects with students. Rooted in an analysis of the problem which paralleled Richard Richardson's interpretation of the "levelling downward" of standards, the project is based on the assumption that if nontraditional students are to be adequately prepared for academic success at the university level, then there must be substantial transformations in their very conception of education and their sense of themselves as learners. Settings must be constructed which help nontraditional students experience education as something more than simply memorization and recitation. Put another way, they must be initiated into the intellectual community and enticed to participate in the practices of that community.

We believe that this type of student change can not be achieved through the mechanical imposition of increased requirements or entrance and exit criteria for courses. For students to be prepared for initiation into academic and professional communities, they must engage in and experience the real nature of intellectual activity. This in turn requires an alteration and upgrading of the teaching/learning process in the classroom and a deeper understanding of the role of literate activity in the

curriculum. As a result, much of the grant money has gone to an extensive set of faculty development activities designed to forge collegial agreements about the standards of literacy and appropriate pedagogical activities. This is coupled with curriculum design efforts to develop a two-year program relying on an integrated curriculum emphasizing text-based teaching and learning which is designed to place language use at the center of attention.

The curriculum, now fully in place at the college, involves a foundation year of two integrated semesters which have been developed and are taught by interdisciplinary faculty teams, a twelve credit "Introduction to the Humanities," and a twelve credit "Introduction to the Social Sciences." A series of second year seminars have also been developed and offered.

Faculty on the interdisciplinary teams undergo an intensive process of staff development for three semesters. In the first semester of their participation, team members are given released time to participate in a semester long curriculum development seminar. During the next semester they teach for the first time and in the third semester they are again given released time for a critical review and revision seminar. Additional staff development has included a number of workshops involving faculty from all five current teams, as well as other associated staff and a week long Summer Writing Institute.

Summary of Activities

A. Teaching Teams in Full-Time Program. There are five teaching teams of four faculty working in TOP, three in the social sciences and two in the humanities. All have completed the three semester faculty development process.

B. Teaching Teams in Part-Time Program. We have conceived our part-time program as one of modifying the full-time curriculum of the foundational year for part-time students and have constructed several six hour linked courses based our the TOP curricular and pedagogical model. These are offered to part-time students both during the day and evening and include the mentoring, counseling and career planning activities developed in the full-time program.

C. Curriculum Development. Each of the five teams participated in a Curriculum Development Seminar and developed a twelve credit hour integrated curriculum in either the humanities or social sciences. These seminars met weekly under the guidance of curriculum development and staff development specialists and the general supervision and support of the project co-directors. To insure reasonable congruence of objectives and pedagogical practices we began a regular series of general meetings involving all program staff. This permitted discussion across all the teams about programmatic concerns not specific to either social science or humanities. A series of seminars have also been developed and are offered to students during their third and four semesters.

D. Counseling/Mentoring. An aim of the project has been to break down the traditional distinction between academic and

student service functions. To accomplish this we have attempted to include counseling staff as active teaching members of each team and to provide settings in which faculty can learn mentoring and advising skills usually associated exclusively with the counseling department. We have developed a two-semester sequence of classroom activities which are included as a regular part of a student's classroom schedule. These Counseling/Mentoring Seminars are being taught in each of the five faculty teams.

E. Critical Literacy Project. In their invitation to join the project and during the curriculum development seminar, new faculty were asked to place student language use at the center of the curriculum by participating in the construction of an "interpretive community." The task of staff development was to devise styles of working with student papers which could be carried by all the faculty, both very experienced teachers and those new to the issues of writing instruction. The goal of the negotiation process was to achieve at least a rough comparability in the way faculty deal with student language use. It was also meant to distinguish our approach from conventional across-the curriculum writing programs. These we saw, particularly in their centralized forms, as often leaving basic pedagogical styles and goals untouched, with faculty integrating writing merely as an "add-on" to what they typically do, for instance having students maintain a journal. In our formulation, however, writing was to be at the service of initiating students into an academic community committed to particular styles of interpretation, writing and analysis.

But to achieve this the faculty had to be in sufficient agreement that they could consistently model these practices and styles for the students.

To achieve this, the project co-directors, in association with the curriculm development specialist, the staff development specialist and the writing specialists, conducted a series of in-service workshops on the "Critical Literacy" issue, as well as leading an intensive one week summer institute primarily for project staff as well as other interested faculty. The faculty are each expected to lead student writing groups, and, as this role is unfamiliar to them they receive the ongoing assistance of the project staff.

F. Professional Growth Seminar. Construction of the second year interdisciplinary seminars also requires curriculum development and presented an opportunity for staff development throughout the College. During each semester of the project, faculty were asked to submit proposals to the supervising committee of divisional deans. Faculty members selected to develop the interdisciplinary seminars conducted professional development seminars for members of the professional staff of the college. The goal of these seminars was to help the seminar leader sharpen his or her sense of the issues and the content that will be taught through drawing on the contributions of faculty from other areas; thereby helping shape its interdisciplinary framework. We have offered two professional growth seminars during each semester of the project. Topics have included "Styles of Interpretation of Classical and Medieval

Literature," "The Professions in American Society," "Interpreting Marx" and "Black American Women's Narrative."

. Evaluation and Documentation. This has taken two forms--the longitudinal statistical study along with a detailed and ethnographic investigation of the nature and process of faculty development that the project is trying to promote.

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